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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 THESSALONIKI 0007

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SUBJECT: NORTHERN NOTES JANUARY 2005

Following is a summary of recent political and economic developments in northern Greece:

#### STIFF TRAFFICKING SENTENCES UNDER NEW LAW

1. (U) In a case that marks the first reported sentence handed down under Greece's 2002 Anti-trafficking law, a Kavala court convicted a 40-year-old trafficker, Petros Kokkalidis, to 12 years and 10 months of imprisonment and fined him 52,625 Euros. [Note: The anti-TIP legislation came into force under a 2003 Presidential Decree. Endnote]. Anti-trafficking NGOs from the STOP NOW network assisted the young Ukrainian victim in this case, who had found refuge in an Ioannina shelter, and provided psychological support during the trial. The victim testified for a grueling five and a-half hours. Public support for the trafficker from residents of his village made her ordeal all the worse but did not affect sentencing. The victim now resides and works legally in Ioannina.

2. (U) In another TIP case on January 27, an Appeals Court in nearby Komotini (Thrace) upheld the convictions of nine Greek nationals implicated in a trafficking ring. The defendants had been arrested last year for kidnapping a foreign woman and forcing her into prostitution. Four of them were sentenced to 10 years and four months imprisonment while the others received five-year sentences.

3. (U) More potential TIP arrests were also reported this month. Two Greek nationals and a Turkish citizen were arrested January 8 on the Turkish side of the Evros River (Greek-Turkish border) along with four women, believed to be from Georgia. On January 18 Thessaloniki security police dismantled a trafficking ring of ten Greek and foreign nationals who were engaged in forcing young women from Eastern Europe into prostitution. One of the victims managed to escape and went to the police. The victim was officially recognized and accorded police protection.

4. (U) Comment: Absent statistics on prosecutions, it is not possible to assess whether these individual cases point to a positive trend but they are certainly a step in the right direction. Police and justice officials seem to be enforcing anti-TIP legislation more vigorously. The Consulate General is sponsoring a TIP training workshop for Northern Greece prosecutors, judges and police on February 15 with the Ministries of Justice and Public Order. The Macedonia- Thrace Ministry also submitted a proposal for participation in the EU's "AGIS" program, a project for police, judicial and NGO cooperation on TIP. End comment.

#### ALIEN SMUGGLING ON THE RISE

5. (U) At a January 20 meeting with Northern Greece counterparts, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Police Director, Brig. General Katsaras, cited alien smuggling as the largest problem in the region. Thrace saw a 46 percent increase in illegal aliens in 2004 compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, TIP cases in Thrace decreased from 21 cases in 2003 to 16 in 2004.

6. (U) Thrace border guards arrested January 17 a 39-year-old Turkish national for transporting 52 illegal aliens on a tractor-trailer and another three Turkish nationals in a private vehicle acting as lookouts. The migrants (13 Iraqi, 9 Palestinians, 6 Somali, 6 Bangladeshi, 4 Sudanese, 4 Syrians, 3 Nepali, 3 from Sri Lanka, 2 Algerians, and 2 Mauritanian) had crossed the Evros River in a plastic boat with the help of two Iraqi traffickers. Migrants' destination was Athens where, upon arrival, they would each pay 2,800 euros. In an unrelated case on January 13 a Greek national was sentenced to six years and four months imprisonment and a fine of 69,000 Euros for transporting 65 Asian

and Middle Eastern illegal immigrants in a truck.  
TRANSPORT LINKS BETWEEN BLACK SEA REGION AND EU

17. (U) The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) pact Ministerial was held in Thessaloniki on January 27 - 28, under the Greek presidency. In a joint statement, BSEC transport ministers stressed the need for transport links to the EU and proposed extension of the Inter-European Transport network into the Black Sea region and establishment of maritime routes connecting Black Sea and Mediterranean ports. Greek Transport Minister Liapis concluded that this statement would contribute to the development of the wider Black Sea region. Turkish Transport Minister Gildirim underlined the importance of transport to Turkey's trade in the region and with the EU, and said that the overland transport corridor linking Istanbul with Thessaloniki by road and rail would be completed in a few years.

#### ANARCHISTS RAID GOLDEN DAWN OFFICES

18. (U) On January 22 a group of approximately one hundred anarchists trashed the downtown office of the far right Golden Dawn coalition in Thessaloniki. Upon the police's arrival, the anarchists sought refuge on the campus of Aristotle University to avoid arrest. Police believe this episode was related to the private visit of French National Front leader Jean Marie LePen to Athens the same day to attend the wedding of Greek National Front leader Makis Boridis.

#### NARCOTICS AND COUNTERFEITING

19. (U) Press reported the following cases:

-- Komotini border guards arrested January 8 two Turkish nationals bearing forged Bulgarian passports purchased for 2,500 euros, each.

-- Thessaloniki police arrested January 10 two Albanian nationals and a Greek woman on felony drug smuggling charges, following the confiscation of a 1.7 kilos of heroin.

-- An Albanian national was arrested January 26 in Karditsa (Thessaly) for cultivating 21 kilos of unprocessed hashish in his field.

-- Thessaloniki police arrested January 29 three foreign nationals in possession of 88,5 kilos of hashish.

-- Thessaloniki police arrested January 30 four foreign nationals and seized 1.5 kilos of heroin found in their possession.

-- On January 19 a court in Thessaloniki sentenced a 50-year-old Bulgarian, Sorit Stoef, a member of a drug smuggling ring active in Northern Greece, to life imprisonment. His 23-year-old son, and his Greek partner, Dimitris Boltsis, were each sentenced to ten years imprisonment.